



Focus

Request for public comment on Hanford Natural Resource Trustee Council's Columbia River Aquatic Resources Assessment Plan

The Hanford Natural Resource Trustee Council (Council) has released the *Hanford Site 100 Area Assessment Plan Volume I: Columbia River Aquatic Resources* for a 30-day public-comment period, which runs from **June 7 to July 7, 1999**. An open house and public meeting will be conducted on **June 17, 1999**, to discuss the plan and receive comments.

Background

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act allows for multiple processes for environmental cleanup and restoration. Two processes commonly implemented at National Priority List (NPL) sites include the remedial investigation and feasibility study process and the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. A number of interim cleanup decisions have been made in the 100 Area NPL site by the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. More than likely, most of these interim actions will be deemed final remedies. The council has an opportunity to shape these decisions by incorporating information about potential injuries to natural resources and methods to protect or restore the resources.

The council comprises representatives from state, federal and tribal natural-resource trustee organizations that are currently performing an assessment of hazardous substances released within the Hanford Site 100 Area. This 100 Area assessment is similar to, but less formal than, the regulatory NRDA process available to trustees. The goal of such an assessment is to determine injury to natural resources caused by the release of hazardous substances, and ultimately to restore and further protect those resources from future exposure.

The council has prepared and is releasing for public comment the *Hanford Site 100 Area Assessment Plan, Volume I: Columbia River Aquatic Resources*. This document represents the first phase of a comprehensive process to examine injuries from 100 Area releases. During this first phase, only current exposures and potential injuries to aquatic resources in the Columbia River have been assessed. Assessment of past injuries from 100 Area releases has not been performed in this phase, but may be addressed at a later date at the discretion of the trustees. The assessment plan is designed to be in general accordance with the NRDA regulations, 43 CFR Part 11, promulgated by the U.S. Department of the Interior.



The council decided to proceed with Volume 1 of the assessment plan based on evidence in ground water of levels of chromium (VI) that exceed State and federal water quality limits for exposure of aquatic life. This phase of the assessment plan is based on the most recent contaminant data available from the 100 Area and the Columbia River to document current exposure and projections of potential injury based on those exposures. The assessment addresses the Columbia River and associated aquatic system from River Mile 385, located in the Hanford Reach just upstream of the B and C reactors, to the river's mouth and coastal shoreline influenced by the river's Hanford-derived contaminant load. No indications of exposure of aquatic resources to Hanford-derived contaminants were found upstream from Mile 385. Therefore, Mile 395 was established as the upstream boundary of the assessment area. The assessment area was evaluated in three sections of the river: Mile 385 to McNary Dam, McNary Dam to the mouth of the Columbia, and nearby coastal areas north and south of the mouth of the Columbia.

Several potential investigative approaches are presented in Volume I of the assessment plan to evaluate injury of aquatic resources in the Columbia River. Investigations presented could be used to 1) establish groundwater cleanup criteria; 2) establish/confirm a pathway for contaminants to reach a receptor; and 3) document injury from hazardous substances releases from the 100 Area.

How can you get involved?

A 30-day public-comment period will begin June 7, 1999, and end on July 7, 1999. The Council will conduct an open house and public meeting on June 17, 1999, at Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program office, located at:

1315 W. 4th Avenue, Kennewick, Washington.

The open-house portion of the meeting will start at 6 p.m., with study participants available to answer questions, followed by a short presentation on the study at 7 p.m. Study participants will remain to answer questions and receive comments until 8 p.m.

Comments on the draft assessment plan must be received or mailed by July 7, 1999. Comments will be considered before the final assessment plan is issued. For more information or to submit written comments, please contact:

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Kennewick, WA 99336

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Where can you get more information?

Copies of the draft assessment plan will be available for review and copying beginning on June 7, 1999, at:

- Ecology's Kennewick office, 1315 W. 4th Avenue
- Hanford-site official public information repositories in the locations listed below.

HANFORD PUBLIC INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

Portland

Portland State University
Branford Price Millar Library
934 SW Harrison and Park
Portland, Oregon
(503) 725-3690
Attn: Michael Bowman/Jocelyn Kramer
email: bowman@lib.pdx.edu

Richland

Public Reading Room
2770 University Drive
Consolidated Information Center, Rm. 101L
Richland, Washington
(509) 372-7443
Attention: Terri Traub
email: reading_room@pnl.gov

Spokane

Gonzaga University
Foley Center
East 502 Boone
Spokane, Washington
(509) 323-3839
Attn: Tom Carter
email: carter@its.gonzaga.edu

Seattle

University of Washington
Suzzallo Library
Seattle, Washington
(206) 543-4664
Attn: Eleanor Chase
email: echase@u.washington.edu
Public Service: (206) 543-1937

WORLD WIDE WEB

This document is also available on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.hanford.gov/boards/nrtc/index.html>

If you have special accommodation needs, please contact Mary Anne Wuennecke, Department of Ecology, Nuclear Waste Program, at (509) 736-3036 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).